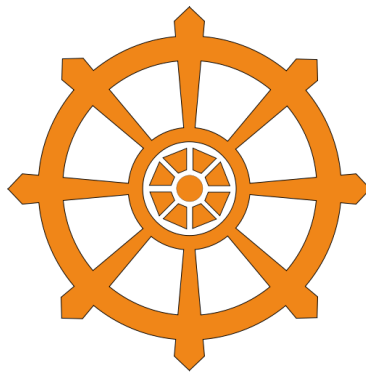


Meditation Guide

With the Sublime Eightfold Way
For Beginners



Bhante Punnaji

**To A Stress
Free Life**

About The Author

Venerable Mahathera M. Punnaji is a Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka of the Theravada tradition. Bhante is a disciple of His Holiness The Madihe Pannasiha, the late Maha Nayaka Thera of Vajirarama, Head of the Mihiripanne Dhammarakkhita Amarapura Nikaya. Bhante Punnaji was ordained at the Bhikkhu Training Centre, Maharagama, in his thirties. He obtained his training in meditation at the Island Hermitage, Dodanduwa. He studied modern science and Western medicine in Sri Lanka and he obtained two doctorates while in the United States, one is Western psychology and another in Western philosophy and comparative religion. Bhante Punnaji has made an in-depth research into the original teachings of the Buddha which he thinks is different from all the modern schools of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana including Zen and Pureland Buddhism. This research was not only academic but also experiential. Bhante also did research into the form of Buddhist Psychotherapy which he thinks is the best way to introduce Buddhism to the modern world. As Buddhism in its original form was not a mere religion of faith and worship but a psychological technique of growth and evolution of the human consciousness.

Bhante Punnaji presents Buddhism as a growth technique that transforms an individual's disposition by changing a person's sense of values and goal in life while it also overcomes the stress and strain of modern living. Bhante points out that the teaching of the Buddha is about a conscious return to the original equilibrium which the normal person loses in childhood due to unconscious emotional impulses. This return to the original equilibrium called NIBBANA is achieved through a psychological technique of conscious evolution of the human consciousness where the human being goes through a paradigm shift and thereby transcends all human weakness and enters a superhuman "divine" state which all religions worship as "God". This means that Buddhism is a humanistic philosophy that recognizes the unity in all religions and defines

“religion”, “God” and “divinity” from a humanistic point of view. This also means that the Buddha has brought a saving message of hope to the world by introducing a very optimistic philosophy that guarantees a freedom from all human weakness and suffering by means of a conscious human psychological techniques of growth and evolution of the human mind which brings results here and now.

Bhante Punnaji has many students in the United States, Canada and Europe who had benefitted from his teachings and who express their appreciation by speaking about the immense change in their lives for the better. Bhante is well known for his clear, accurate and original presentation of Buddhism and has grateful students the world over/in many parts of the world.

Bhante Punnaji is well-versed in Western fields of scientific knowledge including medicine and has a thorough understanding of comparative religions, philosophy and psychology. Bhante’s interpretations of the original teachings of the Buddha have been much enriched by these forays beyond a mere study and practice of Buddhism.

Bhante has played a significant role in the dissemination of Buddhism in the West and is well known to Buddhist in Canada, United States and abroad. Sought by many as a resourceful spiritual guide, Bhante Punnaji shares his time between the Buddhist centres in Canada, United States, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and other countries.

ARIYAMAGGA BHAVANA

(The Sublime Eightfold Way)

Instructor

Ven. Mahathera M. Punnaji

MEDITATION GUIDE/RETREAT

This form of meditation is based on the original teachings of the Buddha as it is found in the Pali Sutta Pitaka. It is conducted at three retreat levels:

- (1) Beginners** – **Selective Thinking**
(anussathi)

- (2) Intermediate** – **Harmonious Exercise**
(sammappadhana)

- (3) Advanced** – **Steps to Awakening**
(satta bojjhanga)

MEDITATION LEVEL – I

Selective Thinking

The aim of this retreat is to purify the mind. We are all used to taking a physical bath to clean and cool the body. After the bath we feel fresh and comfortable. It is very rarely, however, or even never do we get the opportunity to clean our minds in the same way. We tend to carry into adult life the dirt we have been accumulating since our infancy, and probably we even carry accretions from our former lives.

Therefore the reason for our meditation is clear: — by purifying the mind we become **GOOD, HAPPY, AND WISE**. The individual creates society, and society creates the world. Therefore, we begin with the individual, and that is: -- **YOU**. The impurities to be eradicated are the self-centred emotions, which the Buddha called lust (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), the sense of ‘self,’ which is the basis of all selfishness.

These emotions not only pollute our minds, but they also interfere with our physical health. This problem is what is today called **STRESS**. Emotions have been useful for some lower animals for the preservation of life and the propagation of the species. But the human beings have a better tool for that purpose, which is **intelligence**. Intelligence is the one distinctive faculty that makes the human being stand out among all other animals.

It is this human intelligence that is responsible for all the scientific inventions and discoveries of the modern world. It is this same intelligence, which when further evolved, brings about the solution of the problem of existence. Yet lack of intelligence, or the wrong use of intelligence in catering to our self-centred emotions, can lead to all the crimes, terrorism, and even wars, as they exist in the world today. In fact, it was to develop this especial human intelligence and to put it to better beneficial use, for the sake of all mankind that the Buddha set out to propagate his Glorious Gospel.

Sometimes we hear people raising doubts, when we speak of purifying the mind. This doubt is partly due to certain concepts prevalent in the West. Some Western religious beliefs and some concepts in Western psychology and biology seem to contradict this idea of purification of mind.

Some Western religions have maintained that human beings can never be pure, for only God is pure. There is also a common saying in the West, "To err is human, but to forgive divine." This seems to imply that human beings can become pure only through the forgiveness of sins by God, and not through a transformation of the character of the individual. In addition, there has been a historical reason for this Western attitude of mind. A religious community called Puritans, who were also supposed to purify the mind, had created some negative feelings in Western society.

Some modern Western psychologists, such as Sigmund Freud, have thought that emotions are natural and instinctual, and that emotional arousal is built into our system, and therefore emotion cannot be eliminated. Even modern biological thinking seems to support this concept. Biologists think that emotion is necessary for the preservation of life in animals, including humans.

Although Freud thought that these emotions are built into our system as instincts, he was also aware that emotions are the result of the reaction of our body to stimulation by the environment. This reaction is a chain reaction, a flowing in, or an influx. Therefore emotion can also be seen as the result of an influence (*asava*) of the environment on the organism. This means, it is not an instinct, nor is it something that is naturally born in the body like hunger or thirst. This is why most modern psychologists today do not regard these emotions as instincts.

In fact Eric Fromm, a modern psychoanalyst, has pointed out that Freud always said, “where there is the *id* there shall be the *ego*,” which means that Freud had the intention of eliminating the self-centred emotions, as he was aware that the emotions were the cause of trouble, and that instead of the emotions dominating the personality, reason should begin to dominate. This was also what Daniel Goleman, the psychologist seemed to point out, in his recent book entitled *Emotional Intelligence*, though he did not hope to eliminate the emotions altogether, for he pointed out the need for emotions.

It was the Buddha, more than twenty five centuries earlier in the East, who showed the way to attain a perfectly pure mind, by eliminating the emotions altogether. Many of his disciples achieved this mental purity, through the natural human technique taught by the Buddha. This wonderful occurrence was based on the principle mentioned in this oft quoted passage from the Buddha:

“The mind is essentially pure; it is polluted by adventitious impurities. Ignorance of this fact prevents people from purifying their minds,” and so obtain freedom from the miserable insecurity of life. (*Ang.I.2*).

This means, the mind can obviously be compared to water. For water is a pure substance, which gets polluted due to foreign matter falling into it. It is due to the water being a pure substance that it can be purified by filtration or distillation, even though water is never found in a pure form naturally. In the same way, the mind can also be purified, because it is essentially pure, provided we know the proper technique, and the mind too can never be found in its pure form normally.

It is this **saving technique of the Buddha** that you will learn during this retreat. This technique was the original form of Buddhist meditation taught by the Buddha, which is found in the Sutta Pitaka. The method of meditation used in this beginners retreat, is explained in the *Dvedhā vitakka Sutta*, which is given in translation at the end of this booklet.

Of course there are some critics who say that the Buddha did not eliminate emotions altogether because he cultivated positive emotions like *metta*, *karuna*, *mudita*, and *upekkha*. Yet it is important to understand that there are no positive emotions, according to Western psychologists like Sigmund Freud, or even according to the Buddha. The so called positive emotions like *metta*, known as the “divine dwelling” (*brahma vihara*) is not an emotion, but a selfless state of mind, which appears in perfect form only in the absence of the self-centred emotions: lust (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), where delusion is the “sense of self” (*atta*) or sense of “existence” (*bhava*). This means, only the emancipated supernormal individuals (*arahant*) experience genuine selfless universal benevolence (*metta*).

Selective Thinking

Meditation will be understood during this beginner's retreat as **selective thinking**, which is choosing the thoughts we think, instead of thinking whatever thought that enters the mind. This means, we must constantly watch the thoughts that enter the mind and very scrupulously choose between good and bad thoughts. Normally thoughts come into our minds quite unconsciously, and most of them are emotional. Very often we are even carried away by these emotional thoughts. The moment we become conscious of them, however, they stop. This is because emotional thoughts can run only unconsciously, and they cannot continue consciously. Therefore the moment we become conscious of them, they must naturally stop.

This is the fact on which modern psychoanalysis is based. The aim of psychoanalysis is to make the unconscious thoughts become conscious. This making of the unconscious emotions conscious seems to be what Daniel Goleman called “emotional intelligence.” It is also the fact on which the technique of the Buddha was originally based. The aim of the meditation called *satipatthana* is to become conscious of our unconscious emotional reactions. If we are unconsciously carried away by our emotional thoughts, we remain not only unconscious but also unhappy. This is what we call worry and day dreaming.

Meditation, as we practice it, therefore, is being awake to and noting the thoughts that come into our mind. It is also consciously selecting the thoughts we think: avoiding the emotional thoughts and developing the calming thoughts. This means, we must always be conscious of our unconscious emotional thoughts that habitually come into our minds. By doing so we stop all unconscious emotional thoughts, and we start thinking only consciously and rationally.

We learn to overcome old habits of unconscious emotional thinking, and we learn to consciously cultivate new habits of calm thinking. Cultivating a new habit, however, means practice, and practice means repetition, which must be maintained throughout. It is like learning to type or to play a musical instrument.

This means, the kind of meditation that we practice is not an exercise in concentration, but an exercise in wakefulness, and selective thinking. It is not sitting like a statue for twenty minutes or even one hour in the morning, and probably followed similarly in the evening. Selective thinking has to be done every moment in our waking lives, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. Of course, during this retreat, we do not recommend meditating lying down during the day, because you may fall asleep. At night, however, you can meditate lying down, but when you fall asleep at night, expect to start walking the moment you are awake. This meditation has to be practiced all the time during your retreat, even at night, no matter what posture you are in.

This means, we have to make a serious decision to change our way of thinking, and be willing to cultivate a new way of thinking by repeated practice.

“Sow a thought and reap a habit
Sow a habit and reap a character
Sow a character and reap a destiny”

If we maintain this conscious awareness of thoughts that come into our minds, and practice selective thinking, we overcome the habit of worrying and being unconscious, and we cultivate the habit of being conscious and happy all the time. This leads to the gradual development of consciousness until we awaken from the dream of existence, like the Buddha, whereby all suffering is brought to an end.

There is nothing strenuous about this meditation unless one begins to concentrate. There is no concentration in this form of meditation. Concentration is a strenuous effort. Our aim is to stop concentration, and to keep our mind vacant and calm, and the body relaxed. This is not an easy job either, because there is a natural tendency of the mind to unconsciously concentrate on the past or the future and become emotionally agitated. It is this habit that we are trying to overcome.

There is one important rule, however, that must be carried out whatever be the posture you are in, and that is to **keep your back straight**. This helps in keeping the **mind awake**. If one wants to gain any benefit from this meditation, one has to practice it conscientiously throughout the retreat and possibly even after. It is by constant practice of right thinking that a real transformation and growth can take place in our lives.

Unfortunately our blind emotions are dominating our lives. As children we are mainly dominated by emotions. As we begin to grow up into adulthood, we begin to think more intelligently, but this intelligence is mainly used to gratify our emotions rather than to guide our emotions. When we are adults, even though our intelligence begins to decide what is right and wrong, often when our emotions are excited and strong, we tend to be carried away by our emotions, rather than by our intelligence. Very often we use our intelligence to judge others than to judge ourselves. This dominance of emotions prevents us from acting rationally all the time. We even break the five precepts, which we value very much, when we are dominated by emotions.

What can save us from this plight is the **Harmonious Perspective (*samma ditthi*)**. This special perspective is to be become conscious of the unconscious mental processes that go on as impersonal mental processes dependent on conditions. This is to understand the problem and its solution, without assuming the notion of “*self*”. This resolves the cognitive dissonance between emotion and reason, and brings about a **cognitive consonance**, by means of a **Harmonious Sense of Values (*saddha*)**, which begins to guide our lives, and transform our character by means of a **Harmonious Goal Reorientation (*samma sankappa*)**, by directing our minds towards the **Harmonious Goal of Life**, which is **NIRVANA**, the **Imperturbable Serenity of Mind**.

The **Harmonious Sense of Values** is to understand the distinction between good and bad, in terms of **happiness** and **unhappiness**. It is to understand that **good** is what brings happiness to oneself and others, while **bad** is what brings unhappiness to oneself and others. This resolves the conflict between the **desire to be happy** and the **desire to be good**, the conflict that causes **vacillation** of mind or cognitive dissonance (*vicikicca*). The desire to be happy is the desire to be carried away by emotions and express the emotions. The desire to be good is to be guided by the thinking part of the mind, and desire to suppress the emotions.

The conflict is because happiness is seen as expression of desire, and goodness is seen as suppression of desires, therefore to be good is to be unhappy, and to be happy is to be not good. This way of thinking leads to the question, “Should I be happy and bad, or should I be good and unhappy?” This is vacillation

cognitive dissonance (*vicikicca*). This conflict is between emotion and reason, the emotions pulling in one direction, and reason pulling in another direction. It is emotion in conflict with reason.

This conflict is resolved, however, by the two desires finding union and satisfaction in **tranquility** of mind (*samadhi*) and **relaxation** of the body (*passaddhi*), because **this** tranquility makes one happy as well as good. This is the medial path shown by the Buddha between the pursuit of pleasure and the pursuit of discipline. This was why the Buddha said, “**There is no happiness apart from the Dhamma**” (*sukhaṃ ca na vina dhammaṃ*).

This explains why the Buddha introduced his teaching as the way to end **unhappiness**, rather than the way to end **evil**. The way to end evil might look like trying to suppress our emotions to be good, and the suppression of emotions looks like unhappiness. This is why religiosity and ascetism is commonly seen as “self torture.” If, instead of talking about self discipline that people seem to deride, we begin to talk about happiness that is derived, not from expression of emotions, but from relaxation of the body and tranquility of the mind. Then being good becomes the same thing as being happy. Now happiness is seen as relaxation of body and tranquility of mind. This kind of happiness is a return to the original equilibrium that was lost.

If we examine a baby in a happy mood, we observe that the body is relaxed and the mind is calm. The moment the baby begins to cry, the body is tensed and the mind is disturbed. This shows that the original state is the calm state, and not the

disturbed state. As we grow up and begin to go through life, we are disturbed by many favorable as well as unfavorable circumstances. This disturbance is a reaction of the organism to environmental stimulation where we lose our original equilibrium quite unconsciously. We do not even know how to return to the original state then. Often we even begin to enjoy this disturbance. We do not realize the extent to which begin to suffer as a result. Today the modern psychologists call this **stress**. It was this suffering that the Buddha called *dukkha* and showed the way out of it, by returning to the original equilibrium, NIBBANA.

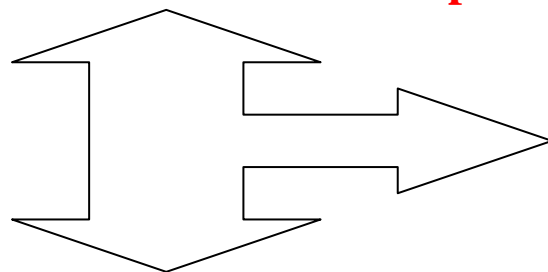
This was also why the Buddha pointed out that the two extremes to be avoided are:

1. **Unconscious Expression** of emotions
2. **Unconscious Suppression** or repression of emotions
3. Instead, the medial way was: –

Conscious Relaxation of the body and Tranquility of mind (*passaddhi – samadhi*) resulting in: –

The imperturbable serenity of mind (NIRVANA)

Unconscious Emotional Expression



**Conscious Relaxation
And
Tranquility of Mind**

Unconscious Emotional Suppression

It is also important to understand that the cause, of all our unhappiness and our feeling of insecurity in the world, is our blind emotions (*tanha*). Therefore the bad thoughts we must get rid of are the self-centered emotional thoughts that come in the form of lust, hate, and the notion of “self.”

These emotions also come in the form of the “five emotional disturbances” (*panca nivarana*):

- (1) Craving for sensual pleasures (*kamacchanda*)
- (2) Anger (*vyapada*)
- (3) Despair and Depression (*thina midda*)
- (4) Anxiety and Worry (*uddhacca kukkuccha*)
- (5) Vacillation of mind/Cognitive Dissonance (*vicikiccha*).

Emotions are disturbances of the mind and body that cause physical tension, and make one uncomfortable and unhappy. Good thoughts, on the other hand, are the peaceful rational thoughts that relax the body, calm the mind, and make one comfortable and happy. Emotions are also unconsciously activated, while good thoughts are consciously thought out. Therefore selective thinking is the replacement of unconscious bad thoughts with conscious good thoughts. It is substituting good thoughts for bad thoughts. It is simply cultivating the habit of good thinking.

Following is a list of good thoughts in contrast with bad thoughts. The bad thoughts are mainly the five emotional disturbances (*nivarana*), and the good thoughts are mainly the opposites of these disturbances. As we begin meditation, the good thoughts are practiced in reference to the Buddha, Dhamma, and the Sangha. Next we learn to cultivate the good thoughts by repeated practice of good thoughts while avoiding bad thoughts.

Thought Discrimination

BAD THOUGHTS (<i>micca sankappa</i>)	GOOD THOUGHTS (<i>samma sankappa</i>)
Emotional thoughts	Calming thoughts
Passion (<i>raga</i>)	Dispassion (<i>viraga</i>)
Hatred (<i>vyapada</i>)	Compassion (<i>metta</i>)
Worry (<i>kukkucca</i>)	Rapture (<i>piti</i>)
Agitation (<i>uddhacca</i>)	Equilibrium (<i>samadhi</i>)
Existential thinking (<i>bhava</i>)	Experiential thinking (<i>dhamma</i>)

Table A1

Meaning of Good Thoughts

DISPASSION: is the opposite of passion. Passion is an emotional reaction to a pleasant sensation, which is also an emotional excitement. It occurs unconsciously, depending on conditions. It occurs only when the necessary conditions are present. Passion is also self-centred and possessive. It leads to conflict and unhappiness. Dispassion, on the other hand, is the absence of emotional excitements. It relaxes the body, and calms the mind. It makes one comfortable, peaceful, and happy. It is unselfish, self sacrificing, and is interested in the welfare of others.

COMPASSION: is to be interested in the welfare of all beings, without making a distinction between oneself, and others. It recognizes that other's happiness or unhappiness is as important as one's own. Compassion broadens the mind, resulting in freedom from self-centredness, worry and unhappiness.

HAPPINESS: is distinct from pleasure. Pleasure is a sensation arising from stimulation of the senses, and is accompanied by tension and emotional excitement. It is a disturbance of the body and mind. True happiness, on the other hand, is the absence of emotional excitement. It is also unselfish, while pleasure is self-centred. Happiness is a selfless freedom from worries and anxieties. It is a pleasant state of undisturbed, relaxed, calm, peaceful, happiness.

TRANQUILLITY: is a state of relaxation of the body and calmness of mind, due to the absence of emotional disturbances. It is a peaceful stillness of mind, which is conducive to clarity of thought, and the gaining of insight into the realities of life.

IN-SIGHT is the introspective awareness of the inner mental process. When the calm and tranquil mind is turned inwards, it becomes aware of what is going on within. It becomes aware of the unconscious reaction of the body to environmental stimulation of the senses. The reaction is seen in its four stages: perception, conception, emotion, and action. This stops the unconscious reaction, because the unconscious reaction cannot continue while it is conscious. The mind has become conscious of the unconscious process; the determinism of the experience is seen, resulting in seeing the instability, insecurity, and impersonality of the experience. This means the absence of a self or personality is understood. Then one knows that the "Experience," which is determined by conditions, is all there is. The objective "world" and the subjective "self" are but products of this impersonal experience of perception. This "experience" of "existence" is seen to be unstable, insecure and impersonal, and therefore not desirable. This "under-standing" is "in-sight."

Therefore introspective awareness leads to dispassion, which leads to compassion, which leads to happiness, which leads to tranquillity, which leads to introspection, which leads to understanding of what is inside, which is in-sight. Insight begins the cyclical sequence again. And so the mind continues recycling this way until it is fully awakened from "the dream of existence."

Table A2

PROGRESS IN MEDITATION CONSISTS OF FOUR STEPS

1. **Association with those mature in spirit** (*sappurisa sevana*) – This is a person who is aware of the fourfold reality of life taught by the Buddha.
2. **Hearing the Dhamma** (*saddhamma savana*) – This is hearing about the Fourfold Reality: Problem of Existence, its Cause, its Solution, and the Technique of solving it
3. **Deterministic-thinking** (*yoniso manasikara*) – Changing from existential to experiential thinking, based on the teaching about impersonality (*anatta*) and Contingent Concurrence (*paticca samuppada*)
4. **Reorientation of one's life to solve the problem** – (*dhammanudhamma patipatti*) –

This begins the Revolution of the Wheel of Experience (*Dhamma cakka pavattana*).

The revolution of the wheel of experience is an inner transformation of the character of an individual. It is achieved by changing the eight constituents of the character structure, by following the Sublime Eightfold Way. It is a transformation from a self-centred character, to a selfless one.

This **Sublime Eightfold Way** begins with a **paradigm shift** followed by a **goal reorientation**. From this point onwards, it is a matter of moving towards the new goal, which is a return to the original state of equilibrium that was lost. This return to equilibrium is called **homeostasis**.

The paradigm shift is from a consciousness of **existence** (*bhava*) to a consciousness of **experience** (*dhamma*). In other words, it is a change from an awareness of “self” (*atta*) to an awareness of “no self” (*anatta*).

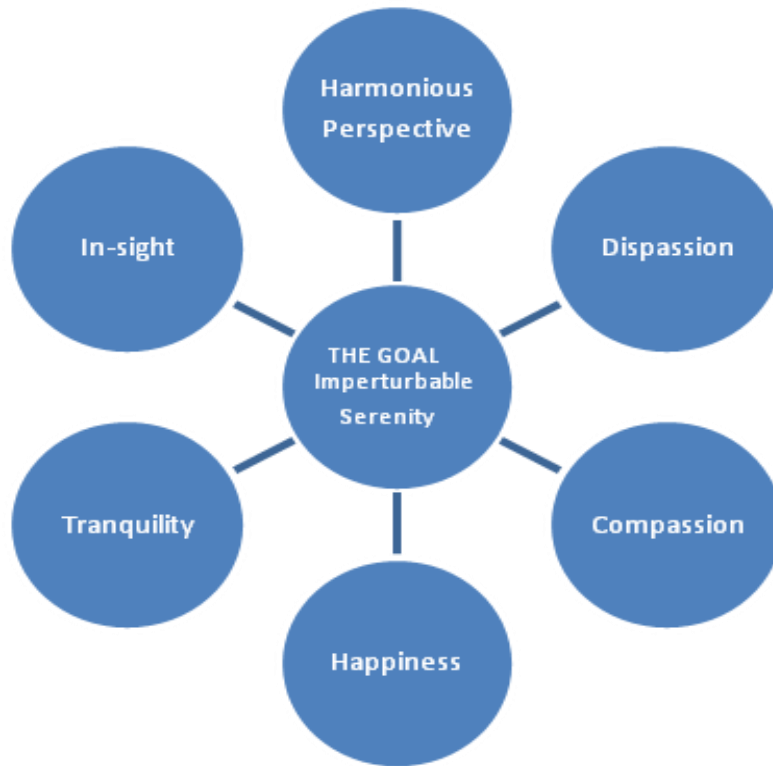
With this comes the understanding that it is the blind self-centred emotions that create the notion of “self.” “Self” is not a rational concept. When this has been understood by our reason, we decide not to be carried away by emotion any more, but to be standing on reason always. This is the goal reorientation, which means we try to stay calm and relaxed under all conditions, instead of being emotional. This reorientation gradually ends up in a return to the original equilibrium, which is homeostasis. Once arrived at this equilibrium by understanding of the problem and its solution, the mind will never be disturbed again. This equilibrium to which one returns, which can never be disturbed, is the “Imperturbable Serenity” – NIRVANA.

THE WHEEL OF EXPERIENCE (*DHAMMA CAKKHA*)

This comes in the form of The Sublime Eightfold Way, as follows:

1. Harmonious Perspective
2. Harmonious Orientation
3. Harmonious Speech
4. Harmonious Action
5. Harmonious Life style
6. Harmonious Exercise
7. Harmonious Attention
8. Harmonious Equilibrium

In the beginner’s retreat we mainly focus on the first five steps in the Sublime Eightfold Way. This means we focus on the Harmonious Perspective, the Harmonious Orientation, the harmonious speech, action, and life of the individual meditator. Yet the other aspects of the Sublime Eightfold Way are partly used.



1. **Harmonious Perspective**, which leads to
2. **Dispassion**, which leads to
3. **Compassion**, which leads to
4. **Happiness**, which leads to
5. **Tranquility**, which leads to
6. **In-sight**, becoming aware of the unconscious reaction
7. **Leading to further dispassion**, beginning the cycle again.

This is how the gradual process of growth or evolution of consciousness takes place, leading to **Awakening from the Dream of Existence (*sambodhi*)**.

STAGE I: RECOLLECTIONS (ANUSSATI)

Reflect on:

- (A). BUDDHA – who became perfect in purity of mind.
- (B). DHAMMA – the technique of purification
- (C). SANGHA – the followers of the way to perfection
- (D). YOURSELF (a beginner on the way.)

We begin by cultivating good thoughts:

- (1) Awareness of the realities of life,
- (2) Dispassion,
- (3) Compassion,
- (4) Happiness,
- (5) Tranquillity,
- (6) In-sight into impersonality

At first, we consider these states of mind in concrete form as attributes of **THE BUDDHA**. Next we reflect on the nature of these attributes in abstract form as DHAMMA. Next we consider these attributes in imperfect and perfect form as present in the SANGHA, in variable degrees. They are also present within ONESELF in imperfect form, which is in the process of development.

RECOLLECTION OF THE BUDDHA (*BUDDHANUSSATI*)

When reflecting on the BUDDHA, we should think of his attributes: dispassion (*viraga*), compassion (*metta, karuna*), happiness (*mudita*), and introspective tranquillity (*upekkha*), because he depicts these attributes in concrete form.

Dispassion

Born in a royal family destined to become a Righteous Global Emperor (*cakkavatti raja*), according to soothsayers, he gave up his beautiful wife, his newborn son, and even his loving father and entered the life of an ascetic, living in the forest, devoted to meditation. This was his great dispassionate renunciation.

What made him do this was the fact that he saw the realities of life: birth, old age, disease, and death, when he experienced the four pre-cognitions: an old person, a sick person, a corpse, and a renouncer. Then the Harmonious Perspective partially dawned on him, which means he obtained an intellectual understanding of the realities of life, even though his emotions were not fully in line with that thinking.

He saw that life consists of being born, growing old, falling sick and dying. He saw it as an ever changing process from birth to death. He did not see death as the opposite of life, but as a part of life. He saw that birth and death are only the two ends of the same stick of life. Life is not a personal existence, but a process of impersonal activity that has a beginning and end. Life is not a static entity, but a dynamic process of change, like a flame.

The Buddha also saw that all human beings are selfishly running after things that are dependent on conditions and therefore subject to aging, disease, and death. They also begin to become attached to these things and personalize them, and are reluctant to let go of them. This results in much crime, wars, terrorism and suffering to everyone.

He also realized that there are some people who renounce and move away from things that depend on conditions and subject to aging, disease, and death. For him, they seemed to be doing the right thing. Therefore he thought: “I will be a renouncer myself, living the right kind of life.”

This decision resulted in the “Great Renunciation” of the Buddha (*Maha Abhinikkhamana*), which began his further growth and development of dispassion, compassion, happiness, tranquillity, and insight, ending in his ultimate freedom from all suffering, through a **paradigm shift**, from **existence** (*bhava*) to **experience** (*dhamma*), thus **Awakening** (*sambodhi*) from the **dream of existence** (*bhava nidra*) and “entering the reality of experience” (*Tathagata*).

His in-sight, resulting in dispassion, which lead to compassion towards all beings, made him see how all beings were suffering, due to passion and attachment. Because all beings are subject to suffering, he felt a great sympathetic resonance or empathy for all beings. He wished that all beings be free from passion and suffering. This was his compassion wherein he felt in unison with all, as if everyone’s suffering was his own. He made an effort to free the whole world, not merely himself, from suffering, by finding the way, for all to be completely free from every suffering.

His great compassion (*karuna*) culminated in the loss of his self-consciousness. The loss of self consciousness resulted in freedom from all self-centred emotions, which lead to freedom from all suffering. This resulted in the happiness of selflessness (*mudita*). This selfless happiness was not an emotional excitement, but a calm, peaceful, and restful state of mind. This was why the mind of the Buddha always remained compassionate, happy, tranquil, and introspective despite the sufferings of the world. He also encouraged others to be compassionate, tranquil and introspective in the same way.

The Buddha was one who had reached perfection in the Harmonious Perspective, resulting in:

1. Dispassion
2. Compassion
3. Happiness
4. Tranquillity
5. In-sight – Introspection – experiencing experience

Awakening from the dream of existence

At this point a **Paradigm shift** occurs from **existence** to **experience**)



This paradigm shift was what made him a Buddha (the Awake one). It was this awakening that culminated in NIBBANA. Once the paradigm shift had occurred, he did not take that to be the absolute truth and stay there. It was only a paradigm. It was possible for him to return to the former paradigm in order to communicate with others. In other words, he could toggle between the two experiences at will.

REFLECTING ON THE DHAMMA

These attributes comprise the essence of the Buddha, which is **THE DHAMMA**. The Buddha is Dhamma in **concrete** form, while Dhamma is Buddha in **abstract** form. This was why the Buddha said, “One who sees me sees the Dhamma, and one who sees the Dhamma sees me.”

Dhamma can also be seen as the essence of spirituality, or the essence of Divinity or God, which is LOVE. The Buddha called this essence the Divine Dwelling (*brahma vihara*), which was described in the form of the Fourfold Experience of – Universal Benevolence (Metta), Empathetic tuning into others feelings of sorrow and happiness as if it were one’s own (Karuna), The selfless happiness derived from the freedom from self-centred emotions (Mudita), Introspective tranquillity and peace of mind independent of the circumstantial vicissitudes of life (Upekkha).

Therefore when reflecting on the Dhamma, one should reflect on these same attributes of the Buddha, but in abstract form: Dispassion (*viraga*), Compassion (*metta, karuna,*), Selfless Happiness (*mudita*), Tranquillity (*samadhi*), and In+sight (*pañña*). By understanding the meaning of these attributes, one begins to appreciate them and cultivate them. Understanding the Dhamma is important for the practice, because it is the extraordinary technique of purifying the mind. Dhamma includes the means (*magga*) to Nirvana as well as the end (*phala*), which represent the benefits gained from the practice.

For an intelligent person the Dhamma becomes a map to find the way to Nirvana. This Dhamma is the Harmonious Perspective. Without the Dhamma one cannot reach the goal. We cannot depend on teachers blindly, because they may lead us in the wrong direction. It is only by understanding the road properly ourselves that we can reach the goal. Treading the spiritual path is a matter of intelligence and strength of mind. This is why the Buddha said, “I do not teach the dhamma like showing the way to a blind man who has to trust me blindly and follow me, but I am like a surgeon who operates on the eye and makes the blind man see for himself. Then he has to have confidence only in himself and not in me.” The more we follow the way, the more we begin to understand the way. The more we understand the way the more we begin to follow the way correctly and so reach the goal. Knowledge of the benefits of the practice encourages one to practice.

REFLECTING ON THE SANGHA

The Dhamma was what the Buddha taught His followers to practice. **THE SANGHA**, being the community of followers, they individually possess these qualities to different degrees. Each individual will keep on practicing till each individual reaches the state of perfection, in this life itself or in another life to come. When we think of the Sangha, we think of these same qualities generally present in the SANGHA. We do not think of individuals but we think of the community as a whole. We understand that there are members of the SANGHA who had reached the highest level of perfection and those who are on the way. We also know that there are those who are at our own level. Sometimes we are aware of some who are even below our level, just as when standing on an escalator we can see people at the top, those at the bottom, and those standing midway. When we think of the Sangha we see people at different levels. We don't blame or condemn a person at the lower level for being at that level. We only think, "If that person can reach the higher level some day, I can also reach the higher level some day." This gives us courage to practice. When we consider how even those at the lowest levels will someday reach the highest, we are inspired to practice. Reflecting on the Sangha we reflect on the same attributes.

REFLECTING ON ONESELF

We can cultivate these same qualities **WITHIN US**. We can examine ourselves to discover to what extent we possess these qualities within us, and also to what extent these qualities are absent in us. This tells us how much we need to practice in order to reach perfection. This knowledge inspires and encourages us. When we reflect on the Buddha, Dhamma, and the Sangha we are inspired to cultivate these qualities to perfection within us. When we reflect on ourselves we see ourselves too standing on the escalator but moving upwards little by little. Even if the escalator is slow we are still moving. We are progressing. Our speed depends on our level of enthusiasm.

STAGE II: CULTIVATION OF GOOD THOUGHTS

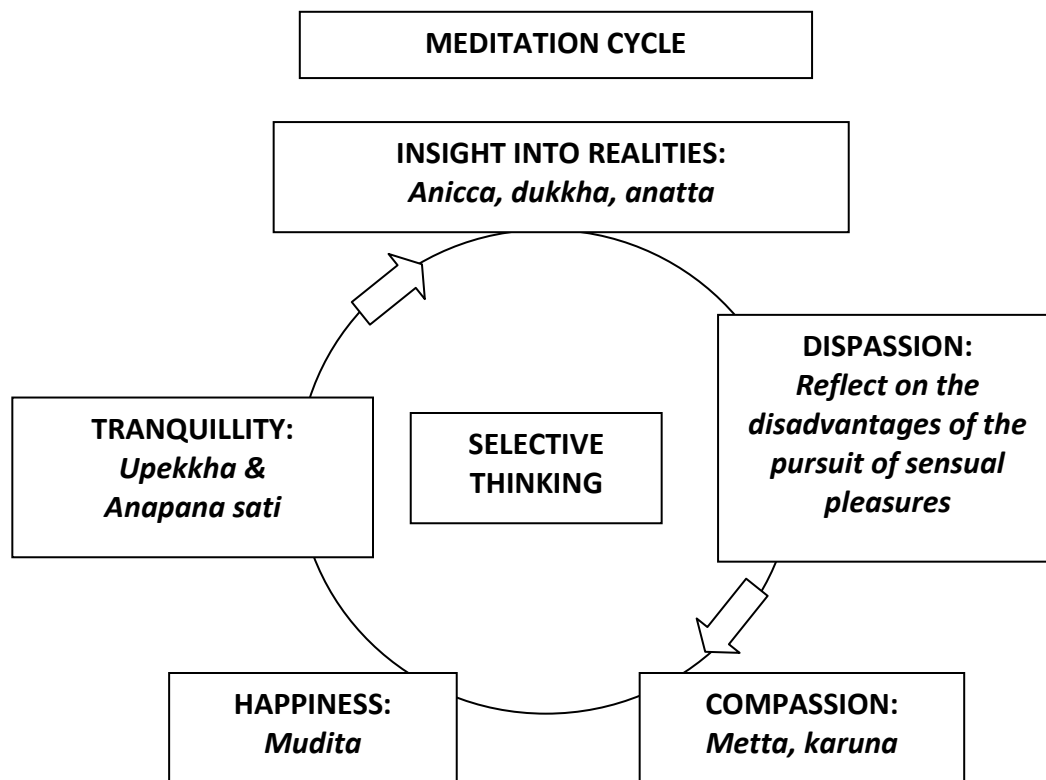
After reflecting on the Buddha, Dhamma, and the Sangha, and even on oneself, and having got the inspiration to practice, one then begins to practice cultivating these qualities within us.

Reflect on:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (A). AWARENESS OF THE REALITIES OF LIFE | Reflecting on the instability, painfulness and impersonality of all conditioned phenomena. |
| (B). DISPASSION | Reflection on the disadvantages of the pursuit sensual pleasure and attachments |
| (C). COMPASSION | Selfless interest in the welfare of all beings |
| (D). HAPPINESS | Experiencing the Happiness of selflessness |
| (E). TRANQUILLITY | Focussing attention on the experience within and the resulting stillness of mind |
| (F). AWARENESS OF THE REALITIES OF LIFE | Reflecting on the instability, painfulness and impersonality of all conditioned phenomena |

THE HARMONIOUS CYCLE OF MEDITATION

This method of meditation begins a harmonious cycle that brings about a transformation within an individual, resulting in gaining the qualities of dispassion, compassion, happiness, and tranquillity of mind. Remember this change is gradual and not sudden. It depends on the amount of practice.



AWARENESS OF THE REALITIES OF LIFE

The Logic of this Reflection

1. Instability (*anicca*)

There are no entities in the world

There are only activities (*sankhara*)

Every activity has a beginning, an end, with change in between

Every activity is dependent on conditions

When conditions are present they begin and continue

The absence of one condition stops the activity

All apparent entities are mental constructs

All that I call mine or my-self are such mental constructs (*sankhara*)

Mental constructs are of two kinds: subjective and objective

The subjective construct is the “self”

The objective constructs are the “world” and “things” in it

All that we find are subjective and objective activities

The construction may be mental or physical

Such a construct is dependent on conditions

Every construct that is dependent on conditions is subject to change, destruction, and separation.

When the conditions change, separate, or are destroyed, the construct also changes, separates or is destroyed

Therefore

All constructs are unstable (*sabbe sankhara anicca*)

2. Discomfort (*dukkha*)

All constructs that I call mine or myself are unstable.

What is unstable is insecure

What is insecure is unpleasant and uncomfortable

All constructs are uncomfortable (*sabbe sankhara dukkha*)

3. Impersonality (*anatta*)

What is uncomfortable is not as I wish.

If it is not as I wish, it is not under my power.

If it is not under my power, it is not mine.

Whatever is not mine cannot be me, or a part of me.

Whatever cannot be me, or a part of me, cannot be my “self.”

Whatever is not me, or mine, or my “self” is impersonal.

All experience is impersonal (*sabbe dhamma anatta*)

What is impersonal cannot be personal.

What cannot be personal should not be personalized.

If what cannot be personal has been personalized

Grief, lamentation, pain, distress, and depression follows

To solve this problem one should depersonalize

All constructs when depersonalized, cease to be uncomfortable.

PRACTISING PENETRATIVE AWARENESS

General - Personal

This is to apply the Harmonious Perspective in detail on everything we have personalized.

1. I am subject to aging. I have not transcended aging.
2. I am subject to disease. I have not transcended disease.
3. I am subject to death. I have not transcended death.

All that is near and dear to me is subject to change and separation. When these things are changing and separating all that is left is my emotional state (*kαmmα*). My emotional state makes me unhappy. By depending on changing external conditions for happiness I experience sorrow and unhappiness. While not depending on these external conditions for my happiness, I cultivate dispassion, compassion, happiness and tranquillity, I gain true happiness. Pleasure is stimulation of the senses. Happiness is a state of mind free from selfish emotions.

Specific - Personal

1. My job is dependent on conditions,
Because it is dependent on conditions, it is unstable,
Because it is unstable, it is uncomfortable,
Because it is uncomfortable, it is not under my control,
Because it is not under my control, it is not mine,
Because it is not mine, it is not my “self,” nor a part of my “self.”
2. My social status is dependent on conditions,
Because it is dependent on conditions, it is unstable,
Because it is unstable, it is uncomfortable,
Because it is uncomfortable, it is not under my control,
Because it is not under my control, it is not mine,
Because it is not mine, it is not my “self,” or a part of my “self.”
3. My wealth (bank account, house, car and other properties) is dependent on conditions,
Because it is dependent on conditions, it is unstable,
Because it is unstable, it is uncomfortable,
Because it is uncomfortable, it is not under my control,
Because it is not under my control, it is not mine,
Because it is not mine, it is not my “self,” or a part of my “self.”

4. My family members (parents, spouse, children and other relatives) are dependent on conditions,
Because they are dependent on conditions, they are unstable,
Because they are unstable, they are uncomfortable,
Because they are uncomfortable, they are not under my control,
Because they are not under my control, they are not mine,
Because they are not mine, they are not my “self,” or a part of my “self.”

5. My friends and associates are dependent on conditions,
Because they are dependent on conditions, they are unstable,
Because they are unstable, they are uncomfortable,
Because they are uncomfortable, they are not under my control,
Because they are not under my control, they are not mine,
Because they are not mine, they are not my “self,” nor a part of my “self.”

6. My self (body, sensations, emotions, and thoughts) is dependent on conditions,
Because it is dependent on conditions
, it is unstable,
Because it is unstable, it is uncomfortable,
Because it is uncomfortable, it is not under my control,
Because it is not under my control, it is not mine,
Because it is not mine, it is not my “self,” or a part of my “self.”

General - Personal

- 1.I am subject to aging. I am not free from aging.
- 2.I am subject to disease. I am not free from disease.
- 3.I am subject to death. I am not free from death.

All that is desirable and pleasant to me will change and separate from me. Therefore, there is nothing to desire or personalize. All that is left for me is my emotional state. This emotional state is my *kamma*. My *kamma* is the emotions I live with. It is this *kamma* that gives me happiness or unhappiness. It is due to these emotions that I will be reborn. Therefore, I will not hold onto things that are unstable (what is subject to old age, disease and death). My only purpose in life therefore is to purify my thoughts. *Kamma* is my only inheritance. I am born of *kamma*. My friends, relatives, parents are also *kamma*. My only refuge is my *kamma*. Whatever I do, whether good or bad, it becomes my inheritance. This is the way of life, not only for me, but for all beings.

(This last thought should lead to dispassion within oneself, as well as compassion for all beings. This also leads to the loss of self-consciousness, which results in the disappearance of unhappiness and calmness of mind)

Specific - Universal

1. For all human beings, their jobs are dependent on conditions,
Because they are dependent on conditions, they are unstable,
Because they are unstable, they are uncomfortable,
Because they are uncomfortable, they are not under their control,
Because they are not under their control, they are not theirs
Because they are not theirs, they are not themselves or parts of themselves.

2. For all human beings, their social status is dependent on conditions,
Because it is dependent on conditions, it is unstable,
Because it is unstable, it is uncomfortable,
Because it is uncomfortable, it is not under their control,
Because it is not under their control, it is not theirs,
Because it is not theirs, it is not themselves or a part of themselves.

3. For all human beings, their wealth (bank account, house, car and other properties) is dependent on conditions,
Because it is dependent on conditions, it is unstable,
Because it is unstable, it is uncomfortable,
Because it is uncomfortable, it is not under their control,
Because it is not under their control, it is not theirs,
Because it is not theirs, it is not themselves or a part of themselves.

4. For all human beings, their family members (parents, spouse, children, and other relatives) are dependent on conditions,
Because they are dependent on conditions, they are unstable,
Because they are unstable, they are uncomfortable,
Because they are uncomfortable, they are not under their control,
Because they are not under their control, they are not theirs,
Because they are not theirs, they are not themselves or parts of themselves.

5. For all human beings, their friends and associates are dependent on conditions,
Because they are dependent on conditions, they are unstable,
Because they are unstable, they are uncomfortable,
Because they are uncomfortable, they are not under their control,
Because they are not under their control, they are not theirs,
Because they are not theirs, they are not themselves or parts of themselves.

6. For all beings, their selves (bodies, sensations, emotions, and thoughts) are dependent on conditions,
Because they are dependent on conditions, they are unstable,
Because they are unstable, they are uncomfortable,
Because they are uncomfortable, they are not under their control,
Because they are not under their control, they are not theirs,
Because they are not theirs, they are not themselves or parts of themselves.

General - Universal

1. All beings are subject to aging. All beings are not free from aging.
2. All beings are subject to disease. All beings are not free from disease.
3. All beings are subject to death. All beings are not free from death.

All that is near and dear to them are subject to change and separation. When these things are changing and separating all that is left is the emotional state (*kamma*). This emotional state makes them unhappy. By depending on these changing conditions for happiness, they experience sorrow and unhappiness. While not depending on these external conditions for their happiness, they cultivate dispassion, compassion, happiness and tranquillity. This brings them true happiness.

Gain and loss, fame and notoriety, praise and blame, pleasure and pain are all unstable, and changing, vicissitudes of life. Changes come in the form of:

Gain or loss (*laba, alaba*)

Social status or loss of social status (*yasa, ayasa*)

Praise or blame (*pasansa, ninda*)

Pleasure or pain (*sukha, dukkha*)

May my mind be unshaken by these vicissitudes of life. May the minds of all beings be unshaken by these vicissitudes. May all beings be well and happy!

(Note: Try to maintain the above thoughts in your mind constantly, by repeating them regularly)

DISPASSION

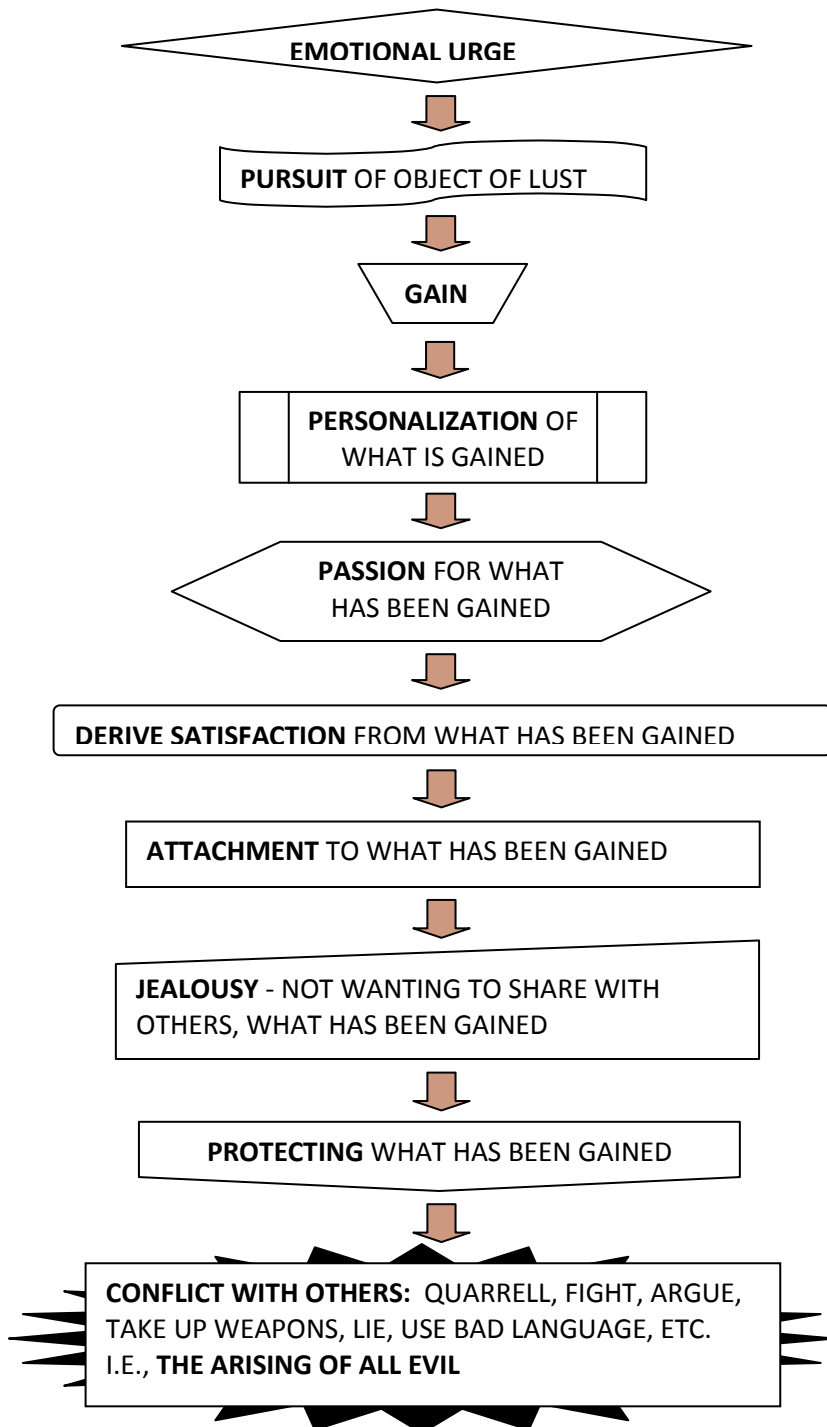
Reflect on the disadvantages of the pursuit of sensual pleasure and attachments. Reflect on the following in relation to concrete examples from your own life. Examine your own past in the light of this teaching:

1. The arising of hatred or desire is the arising of discomfort. The more unpleasant or pleasant the object hated or desired, the more uncomfortable the hatred or desire.
2. The frustration of desire, when not satisfied is even worse. This discomfort can lead to the discomfort of others too. This discomfort, in the extreme, can lead to crime and suicide. It is not always possible to satisfy desires.
3. The struggle to satisfy desire could be uncomfortable too. The failure to satisfy after an uncomfortable struggle can be an even more uncomfortable disappointment.

4. Success in satisfaction after an uncomfortable struggle can be a great relief. The release of tension when the desired object is obtained is what is experienced as normal happiness or pleasure.
5. Once the object desired is obtained, we cease to derive any pleasure out of it. It also can become stale and unpleasant. The pleasure is impermanent.
6. What has been obtained is personalized as, “this is mine.” To lose what has been personalized is to lose a part of oneself. The thought of loss brings about a feeling of insecurity and anxiety. This makes one begin to protect what has been obtained and personalized.
7. The struggle to protect and maintain what has been obtained is uncomfortable too. Protection involves much anxiety, worry, mental and physical discomfort, stress and distress.
8. Finally, we cannot avoid parting from what has been obtained and personalized. When parting, the discomfort is very great.
9. But the cycle starts all over again in spite of the suffering involved. This is how stupidly we suffer, being carried away by our emotions. Blinded by our emotions, we never become aware of the suffering we are going through. We recurrently begin the cycle of coming into being through personalization and continue to suffer.
10. It is only by becoming aware of this suffering that we become free of this self-inflicted pain. Actually, it is not done by us. It is something that happens to us. We are the victims of a natural process. The wisdom of the Buddha shows us the way out. What is unstable, uncomfortable and impersonal should be given up.

The flow chart below illustrates the perils of the pursuit of sensual pleasures, as described in the *Mahanidana Sutta* in the *Dialogues of the Buddha (DB)*.

PERILS OF THE PURSUIT OF SENSUAL PLEASURES



COMPASSION

Cultivation of Compassion:

1. Universal benevolence (*metta*)
2. Empathy (*karuna*)

Compassion has an area dimension called universal benevolence (*metta*) and a depth dimension called empathy (*karuna*)

Universal benevolence (*metta*) is a selfless longing for weal and welfare of all beings. It is not a love for one individual or even love for members of one's family. It is not even patriotism or love for all humanity. It is a longing for the weal and welfare of all beings without exception, even including animals, and even unknown beings in other worlds. Universal benevolence is losing one's self-interest in the interest in all beings with no exceptions. It is like a drop of water that enters the ocean and loses its identity by merging into the waters of the ocean. In the same way, self-interest is lost in the interest in all beings, including oneself. Interest in others is not opposed to self-interest. It is extending one's self-interest to include all other beings in this interest without exceptions. One's interest, which was originally narrow, being concerned only about oneself, is now expanded to include all beings without exception. Universal benevolence is broad mindedness without limits.

Empathy (*Karuna*) the depth dimension is the concern how deeply one is interested in the welfare of all beings. It is interest in the welfare of all beings without making any distinction between oneself and others. Others welfare is as important as one's own, as the mother is concerned about the welfare of one's own child. Empathy (*karuna*) is also to be in tune with the sorrows and the happiness of others as if it were ones own. It may be called sympathy or empathy where ones heart vibrates in unison with that of others, and is able to comprehend the others' points of view and feel it.

Empathy can be directed at five levels of discomfort (*dukkha*):

1. Empathy for those who have lost what they possessed (persons -- through death; things -- through theft; natural disasters, etc.) and for those who are unable to get what they want due to inability.
2. Empathy for those who have lost their self-identity (loss of position in society, suffering from inferiority complex, ego challenged, etc.).
3. Empathy for beings in the human world (in prisons, hospitals, refugee camps, and those subject to starvation, suppression, etc.).
4. Empathy for other less privileged beings (animals, ghosts, beings in hells), that you may not even know about.
5. Empathy for those who are worrying or repenting for their misdeeds.

Empathy can be directed at five levels of comfort (*sukha*)

1. Empathy for those who have gained many things they wished for
2. Empathy for those who have gained their self-identity
3. Empathy for more privileged beings in the human world who are comfortable and happy
4. Empathy for more privileged beings in heavens
5. Empathy for those who are enjoying the freedom from guilt and the benefits of being good and pure in mind

Empathy is not merely the sympathetic resonance for others sorrow but also the sympathetic congratulation for others happiness and comfort.

Cultivation of Universal Benevolence (metta):

We begin by making good wishes towards one-self first, thus wishing one's own welfare. We are all self-centered to start with. It is these self-centered wishes that we expand to include all beings. That is how we broaden the mind. It is important to think these thoughts with feeling instead of merely verbalizing. Because feeling is connected with a mental image, it is important to visualize the area you spread the feeling of compassion.

Therefore thinking as follows:

Step I

May I be well, comfortable, peaceful and happy, free from passion, free from hatred, free from confusion, free from worries, free from fears, and may I maintain myself dispassionate, compassionate, happy and tranquil.

Step II

Just as I should be well, peaceful and happy, may all beings in this room be well, comfortable, peaceful and happy (without making any distinction between oneself and others).

May all beings in this room whether human or non-human, small or large, far or near, visible or invisible, known or unknown, be free from passion, free from hatred, free from confusion, free from worries, free from fears, and may they all maintain themselves dispassionate, compassionate, happy and tranquil.

Step III

Keep repeating this same formula as above extending these good wishes outwards all beings in ever expanding concentric circles, moving from the room to the city, to the province, country, continent, earth, and the whole universe, and even beyond the universe, to all spheres of existence known and unknown, without limits, without bounds, to infinity without excluding anyone.

Step IV

Remain in the final stage of universal benevolence to all beings without exception, as long as possible.

Cultivation of Empathy (*karuna*):

Think of all those beings who are suffering, here in the human world, and even in the world of ghosts and hells. Try to put yourself in their shoes and feel their suffering as if it were your own. Wish that these beings be free from all suffering as soon as possible. Wish that they find happiness soon.

Wish that they be free from passion, free from hatred, free from confusion, free from worries, and free from fears. May they all be dispassionate, compassionate, happy, and tranquil.

Now think of all beings in pleasant conditions here in this human world as well as outside, in the heavenly pleasure worlds, the peaceful worlds of form, and the peaceful worlds empty of forms. Try to imagine how happy and peaceful they are and feel happy about their happiness. Wish that their happiness lasts long. Wish that they be free from passion, free from hatred, free from confusion, free from worries, free from fears, and may they all be dispassionate, compassionate, happy and tranquil.

Cultivation of Selfless Happiness (*mudita*):

With the cultivation of compassion and empathy, self-consciousness has extended beyond its limits to become the consciousness of all beings. Self-consciousness has been transformed into universal consciousness. This loss of self-consciousness brings all unhappiness to an end. What is left is the experience of happiness, which is sometimes called rapture. This is the happiness of selflessness. Cultivate this happiness by thinking, “may all beings be well and happy.” Try to remain in this selfless state of happiness as long as possible without self-consciousness.

Note: This experience of selfless happiness is the result of practicing dispassion and compassion. It cannot be practiced independent of the former states.

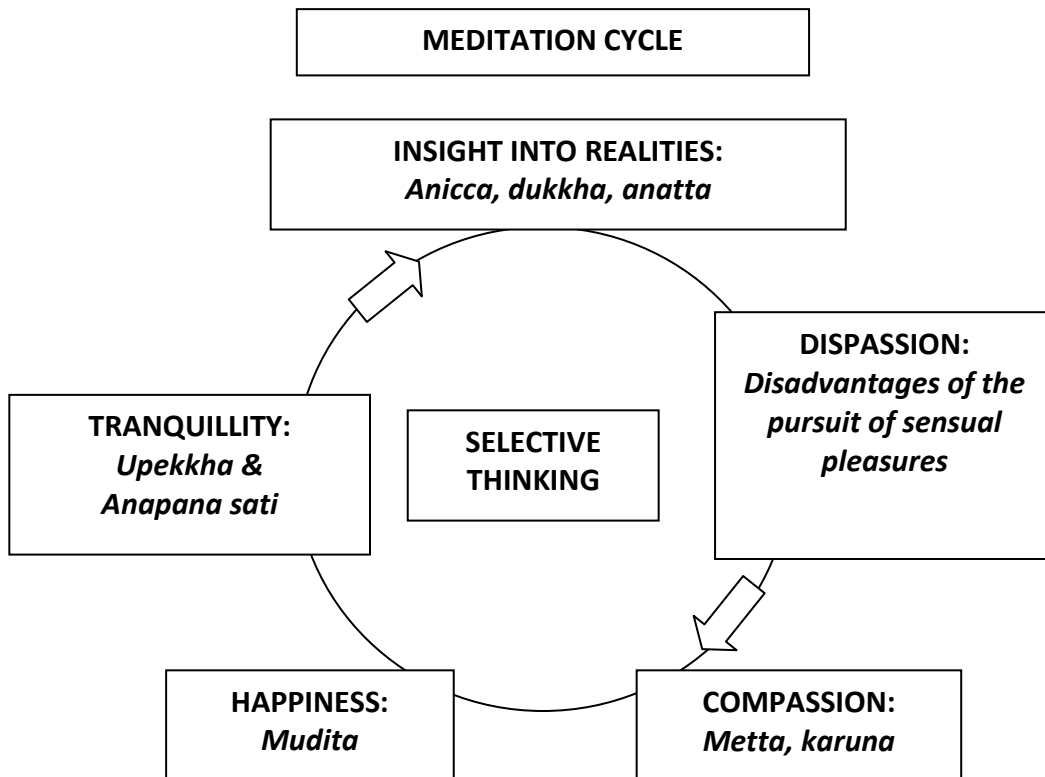
Cultivation of Tranquility (*upekkha*):

The happiness of selflessness is not an emotional excitement. It is a state of tranquility. Try to maintain this tranquility or stillness of mind as long as you can.

Observe the relaxation of the body and the calmness of the breathing and the pleasant comfortable feeling of relaxation. Maintain the calmness by focusing on the comfortable feeling of relaxation. Notice that when happiness is experienced within, attention stays within, without running to external objects. When the attention is focused within, the mind remains undisturbed without searching for happiness in the world outside or external circumstances. This is tranquil introspection (*upekkha*). It is healthy introspection, which should be distinguished from the so-called morbid introspection, which is not introspection at all but self-absorption. Remain in this healthy, relaxed, tranquil, peaceful state as long as possible.

Tranquility is produced by relaxation of the body and experiencing the comfortable feeling of relaxation. It is a resting of the mind, due to the absence of emotions. It is not produced by concentration of the mind but by a stillness of mind due to absence of emotional disturbance.

The five good thoughts to be cultivated are actually five stages in the process of transformation of the mind. In other words, they are five parts of a cycle of change, which ultimately becomes five aspects of the same final state of mind.



In-sight – Gaining the Harmonious Perspective.

Dispassion – The harmonious perspective leads to the giving up of self-centered desires.

Compassion – When selfishness disappears, one is able to take an interest in the welfare of others.

Happiness – When self-absorption and worry about oneself is no more, there is the experience of happiness.

Tranquility – The experience of selfless happiness is not an excitement, but a state of tranquility.

In-sight – Tranquility results in the mind settling within, when true introspection becomes possible. Introspection leads to the experiencing of experience, instead of existence, which is a paradigm shift. This results in Awakening from the “dream of existence.” This is liberation or emancipation (*vimutti*) from the emotional cause and existential suffering.

If this complete insight has not been attained, the Harmonious Cycle begins again.

Harmonious Mental Equilibrium (*samma samadhi*)

This is homeostasis, or the return to the original purity and tranquility of mind, which has been lost due to the emotional reaction to stimulation of the senses in the form attraction and repulsion. This state of equilibrium consists of five parts:

1. Inference (*vitakka*)
2. Inquiry (*vicara*)
3. Rapture of mind (*piti*)
4. Comfort of body (*sukha*)
5. Unity of mind (*ekaggata*)

Introversion of attention (sati+upatthana)

Attention to in and out breathing (*anapana sati*)

1. In this case a follower having gone into a forest, a foot a tree, or empty shelter, sits cross-legged with back erect.
2. Having withdrawn attention from external surroundings, he focuses his attention within. (body, feeling, mood, thought)
3. Fully aware, he breathes in; and fully aware, he breathes out.
4. When breathing in long, he knows “I am breathing in long;” when breathing out long, he knows “I am breathing out long.”
5. When breathing in short, he knows “I am breathing in short;” when breathing out short, he knows “I am breathing out short.”
6. Aware of how the entire body feels, he breathes in
7. Aware of how the entire body feels, he breathes out
8. Relaxing the bodily activity he breathes in
9. Relaxing the bodily activity he breathes out
 - a. Experiencing happiness he breathes in
 - b. Experiencing happiness he breathes out
 - c. Experiencing comfort he breathes in
 - d. Experiencing comfort he breathes out
 - e. Experiencing tranquility he breathes in
 - f. Experiencing tranquility he breathes out

The Establishment of Fourfold Attention (*cattaro satipatthana*)

1. Observing the **body** (*kaya anupassana*)
2. Observing the **feelings** (*vedana anupassana*)
3. Observing the **mood** (*citta anupassana*)
4. Observing the **thoughts** (*dhamma anupassana*)

BREATHING MEDITATION

1. Sit with your back erect
2. Observe any tensions in the body and relax
3. As your body relaxes, the attention will automatically go to the breath
4. Observe the nature of the breathing; is it long or short; obstructed or not?
5. Observe how you feel in the body, as you breathe in
6. As you keep doing this the body begins to relax
7. Then you begin to experience the comfortable feeling of relaxation
8. Then you begin to experience happiness
9. Focus your attention on the happiness and comfort
Enjoy the pleasant feeling of happiness and comfort
Remain in that state as long as possible
Practice this regularly

The benefits of this meditation

1. You will be free from worries
2. You will be happy always
3. You will make friends
4. You can think more clearly
5. You will be good at your work

Appendix

Dvedha vitakka Sutta **Two Kinds of Thoughts**

(MN Volume I: 153)

-A new translation -

Thus have I heard:

Once, the Blessed One was sojourning in Savatthi, at the Jetavanārāma, the Anāthapindika's Monastery. While there, the Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus thus:

“Oh Bhikkhus!”

“Yes Lord.” They replied.

Then the Blessed One said: “Before my awakening, Bhikkhus, while I was still an unawake Bodhisatta, it occurred to me: “Suppose I distinguish between good thoughts and bad thoughts.” So I separated passionate, angry, and violent thoughts; from dispassionate, kind, and peaceful thoughts.”

When I dwelt thus watchful, alert, and vigilant, a passionate thought arose in me. Then I recognized: “A passionate thought has arisen in me, this can lead to my own harm, to others harm and to the harm of both. It obstructs intelligence, favours destructiveness, and leads me away from Nibbana. When I considered: “this lead to my own harm,” it subsided in me. When I considered, this leads to others harm, it subsided in me. When I considered, this leads to the harm of both, it subsided in me. When I considered, this obstructs intelligence, favours destructiveness, and leads me away from Nibbana, it subsided in

me. Every passionate thought that arose in me, I did not accept it, I rejected it, and I eliminated it.

Similarly, when an angry thought arose in me, I did not accept it, I rejected it, and I eliminated it.

When a cruel thought arose in me, I did not accept it, I rejected it, and I eliminated it.

“Bhikkhus, whatever a Bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders over, the mind will be inclined towards it. If he frequently thinks and ponders over passionate thoughts, he has abandoned dispassion, and the mind is inclined more towards passionate thoughts. Similarly, if he frequently thinks and ponders over angry thoughts, he has abandoned kindness, and the mind is inclined more towards anger. Or if he frequently thinks and ponders over cruel thoughts, he has abandoned peacefulness, and his mind becomes inclined more towards thoughts of cruelty.

This way I saw the danger, futility and confusion in unwholesome mental states, and I saw the advantage of cultivating wholesome mental states.

As I dwelt thus: watchful, alert, and vigilant, a thought of renunciation arose in me. Then I recognized, this thought of renunciation has arisen in me. This does not lead me to my own harm, to others harm, or to the harm of both. It promotes intelligence, it supports constructiveness, and it leads me to Nibbana. If I think and ponder over this thought for one night, or for one day, or even for a night and a day, I see no danger. Excessive thinking and pondering, however, might tire my body,

and when my body is tired, the mind becomes tired, when the mind is tired, it is far from tranquility. So I steadied my mind internally, quietened it, brought it to a state of tranquility and stillness. Why is that? In order to prevent the mind from being disturbed.

As I dwelt thus, watchful, alert, and vigilant, a thought of kindness arose in me. Then I recognized, this thought of kindness has risen in me. This does not lead me to my own harm, to others harm, or to the harm of both. It promotes intelligence, it supports constructiveness, and it leads me to Nibbana. If I think and ponder over this thought for one night, or for one day, or even for a night and a day, I see no danger. Excessive thinking and pondering, however, might tire my body, and when my body is tired, the mind becomes tired, when the mind is tired, it is far from tranquility. So I steadied my mind internally, quietened it, brought it to a state of tranquility and stillness. Why is that? In order to prevent the mind from being disturbed.

As I dwelt thus, watchful, alert, and vigilant, a thought of peacefulness arose in me. Then I recognized, this thought of peacefulness has arisen in me. This does not lead to my own harm, to others harm, or to the harm of both. It promotes intelligence, it supports constructiveness, and it leads me to Nibbana. If I think and ponder over these thoughts for one night, or for one day, or even for a night and a day, I see no danger. Excessive thinking and pondering, however, might tire my body, and when the body is tired, the mind becomes tired, and when the mind is tired, it is far from tranquility. So I steadied my mind internally, quietened it, brought it to a state of

tranquility and stillness. Why is that? In order to prevent my mind from being disturbed.

“Bhikkhus, whatever a Bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders over, the mind will become inclined towards it. If he frequently thinks and ponders over thoughts of renunciation, he has abandoned passion, and his mind is inclined towards thoughts of renunciation. If he frequently thinks and ponders over thoughts of kindness or of peacefulness, he has abandon anger and cruelty, and his mind inclines towards kind and peaceful thoughts.

Having gone thus far, I had only to be aware that those good thoughts were going on in my mind. I realized my vigilant practice has progressed, my unremitting introspective attention was established in me, my body was relaxed and comfortable, and my mind was happy, tranquil, and unified.

In this way, withdrawn from passionate thoughts, withdrawn from evil thoughts, I entered upon the first Jhana with observation and inference, experiencing joy and comfort based on mental equilibrium ...ultimately I came to realize that: birth is ended, lived is the holy life, done is what has to be done, and no more is the continuity of existence.

“So Bhikkhus, the safe and good path to be travelled joyfully has been reopened by me, the wrong path has been closed off. What a teacher who seeks your welfare, and has compassion for you can do, that I have done for you, bhikkhus. There are these roots of trees, and these empty huts. Bhikkhus meditate, do not delay, or else you will regret it later. This is my advice to you.”

Thus was the Blessed One's utterance. The Bhikkhus were delighted and inspired by what the Blessed One said.

VITAKKA SANTHANA SUTTA
(MN Volume I: 152)

-A new translation -

TECHNIQUE OF CALMING THOUGHTS

The disciple who is engaged in the development of the superior disposition should cultivate five mental strategies at the appropriate times.

If an image arises in a disciple's mind, which, as he reflects on it, arouses evil and unworthy thoughts associated with lust, hate and confusion, then an image contrary to this image, which is worthy, must be reflected on. When this is done, those evil and unworthy thoughts wane and cease. Just as a skillful carpenter or his-assistant, removes an old wooden peg by placing a new wooden peg and hammering on it, so the disciple removes a bad mental image by substituting a good mental image.

When this is done, if the evil and unworthy thoughts still continue to arise, then one should consider the evil consequences of these evil thoughts thus: "These thoughts are unworthy; these thoughts are incorrect; these thoughts lead to painful consequences." When this is done, those evil unworthy thoughts wane and cease. Just as if there is a woman, man or child who is clean and cleanly dressed, and someone hangs on his or her neck the carcass of a snake, dog, or human, he or she would be horrified, humiliated or disgusted, even so when one considers the evil consequences of evil thoughts, they wane and cease.

When this is done, if the evil and unworthy thoughts still continue to arise, then one should stop paying attention to these thoughts and stop reflecting on them. When this is done, those evil unworthy thoughts wane and cease. Just as a man with eyes who does not want to see something that comes within the range of his vision would shut his eyes or looks aside, even so one should shut one's mind to these evil thoughts by not paying attention to them, and ignoring them.

When this is done, if the evil unworthy thought still arise, then one should focus on relaxation and calmness, calming down the activity of thought. When this is done, those evil unworthy thoughts wane and cease. Just as a man who is running begins to walk slowly, or a man who is walking slowly, begins to stop and stand, or a man who is standing sits down, or a man who is sitting lies down, thus changing from a more tiresome position to a less tiresome, or more restful or more relaxed position, even so one focuses on relaxation and calmness and rests the mind.

When this is done, if the evil unworthy thoughts still arise, one should relax the clenched teeth, relax the tongue pressed on the palate, and thus remove the thought associated with evil easily without exertion, by relaxing and calming the mind. Just as a strong man might hold a weak man by the head or the body and throw him out easily, without exerting himself, being fully relaxed and calm, even so the disciple relaxes the jaws and tongue and throws out the thought without exerting himself, by relaxing the body and calming the mind.

When this is done, those evil unworthy thoughts associated with lust, hate and confusion wane and cease. When they disappear, the mind stays within, rests within, becomes uniform, and enters equilibrium.

The disciple who achieves this is called "Master of Mind." He thinks what he wants to think. He does not think what is unwanted. He

has stopped the emotional urge, broken the fetters, removed egotism, and ended suffering.

REFUGE AND OBSERVANCE

Obeisance:

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa

Obeisance to the Sublime, Emancipated, Harmoniously Awakened One

The Triple Refuge:

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

I take refuge in the Buddha

Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

I take refuge in the Dhamma

Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

I take refuge in the Saṅgha

Dutiyampi – Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Secondly – I take refuge in the Buddha

Dutiyampi – Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Secondly – I take refuge in the Dhamma

Dutiyampi – Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Secondly – I take refuge in the Saṅgha

Tatīyampi – Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Thirdly – I take refuge in the Buddha

Tatīyampi – Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Thirdly – I take refuge in the Dhamma

Tatīyampi – Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Thirdly – I take refuge in the Saṅgha

The Five Disciplinary Principles:

1. *Panatipata veramani sikkhapadan samadiyami*
I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding disrespect for life.
2. *Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*
I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding stealing
3. *Kamesu miccacara veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*
I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding sexual misconduct
4. *Musavada veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*
I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding false speech
5. *Surameraya majja pamadatthana veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*
I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding intoxicants that lead to inebriation and abreaction.

The Eight Disciplinary Principles:

1. *Panatiyata veramani sikkhapadan samadiyami*
I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding disrespect for life.
2. *Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadan samadiyami*
I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding stealing
3. *Abrahma cariya veramani sikkhapadan samadiyami*
I accept the disciplinary principle of divine living, celibacy
4. *Musavada veramani sikkhapadan samadiyami*
I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding false speech
5. *Surameraya majja pamadatthana veramani sikkhapadan samadiyami*
I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding intoxicants that lead to inebriation and abreaction
6. *Vikala bhojana veramani sikkhapadan samadiyami*
I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding untimely meals
7. *Nacca, gita, vadita, visuka, dassana; mala, gandha, vilepana, dharana, mandana, vibhusanatthana; veramani sikkhapadan samadiyami*
I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding shows containing dancing, singing, music, or humor; and avoiding adornments such as garlands, perfumes, unguents, dresses, and ornaments.

8. *Ucca sayana maha sayana veramani sikkhapadam
samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding the use of
elegant and luxurious furniture

It is important to remember that by practicing these disciplinary principles we are attempting to live like the emancipated *Arahats* of old during the retreat. The purpose is to practice the divine life (*brahma cariya*), to the best of our ability now, so that if we cannot complete this purity during this retreat, we would at least be able to continue it in our future lives, till we ultimately attain Nirvana.

No one can become a Buddha instantaneously. Even Prince Siddhatta had to struggle hard in his last life for six years to become a Buddha. It is important to note that his effort was not a mere six year struggle, because this struggle was only his final struggle, after struggling for a countless millions of lives practicing the qualifying *paramitas*. This realization reminds us of the great importance of practicing this retreat. It is of significance to you not only for this life, but also for your entire painful journey through *sansara*.

This is why the Buddhists practice meditation retreats. They are not satisfied with blind imaginary hopes, about future everlasting heavens. They struggle hard to purify their minds here and now. If we do not do it now, there is no hope that we will be doing it in the future. Without it, we cannot hope for salvation. Rising above our normal life to a Divine Life (*Brahma cariya*) is the only way to progress.

Printed by Bhante Punnaji's Sutta Class & Other Well Wishers.

We wish to express our highest appreciation to Bhante for his kindness to allow the students of the Sutta Class to print this booklet, for the benefit of all and the future generations.

Bhante Punnaji has been conscientiously propagating and educating the Buddhist community of the original teaching of the Buddha. It's a boon for all in the class to learn from such a marvelous and knowledgeable teacher.

Bhante, a true son of the Buddha, fully deserves the highest veneration from all.

We sincerely wish Bhante Punnaji, to continue enjoying a healthy and long life, to continue spreading the Dhamma for the benefit of all.

May Bhante Punnaji attain The Supreme Bliss of NIBBANA.

We also dedicate the merit of printing and distributing of The Ariyamagga Bhavana to

- 1) All our departed relatives, teachers and friends since inconceivable beginning;
- 2) All beings whom, we have hurt, harmed or cheated since inconceivable beginning and we seek their forgiveness;
- 3) All beings that had hurt, harmed, or cheated us since inconceivable beginning and we also forgive all; and
- 4) All Sentient Beings, throughout infinite universe and beyond without excluding anyone.